A

LETTER

TO THE

Right Hon. LORD LOUGHBOROUGH,

LORD HIGH CHANCELLOR OF

ENGLAND, *&c. &c.*

FROM

Richard Wilson, Esq. M.P.

ON THE SUBJECT OF HIS BILL OF DIVORCE,

From the

HON. ANNE WILSON,

LATE

TOWNSEND,

PRESENTED IN THE LAST SESSION OF PARLIAMENT

TO THE HOUSE OF LORDS.

--------Ego te intus, et in cute novi.

PERSIUS.

LONDON:

Printed for C. CHAPPLE, No. 66, PALL-MALL, opposite the Palace.

1798.

[*Price One Shilling.*]

A LETTER, &c.

My Lord,

As the *reason* of my addressing this Letter to your Lordship, is of little importance to any other persons but your Lordship and myself, I shall wave avowing it;—*your Lordship, and I very well know it*; and an attentive perusal may possibly discover it to the inquisitive.

Being

BEING a plain matter-of-fact man, not overfond of the periphrasis in others, and wishing to avoid it in myself, I will at once, enter upon the business of this Address:—

YOUR Lordship, *I believe*, is not *entirely uninformed* upon the subject of a Bill of Divorce, I presented in the course of the just expired session of Parliament, to your august House;—neither can it be unknown to your Lordship, that in the principal stage of that Bill (where in all former instances, the fate of such bills has been usually decided) it passed without a single circumstance appearing to form, even a *conjecture*, that it would meet with opposition, delay, or cavil, in the fu-

ture

ture progress of it; although your Lordship may recollect that some pains were exerted to sully its character, by certain questions *said to be proposed*, by that truly right *reverend*, *meek*, *humane*, *liberal*, and *polished prelate*, Dr. SAMUEL HORSLEY, Lord Bishop of Rochester! Before I conclude this Letter, I propose saying a word or two upon these said "*supposed*" questions.

THAT my Bill should not proceed in the accustomed manner, after passing the ordeal of the above-mentioned perspicuous prelate, was a matter of surprize, not only to *me*, but to *every person*, who had any concern in the forwarding it.——After waiting a considerable time, in the hope that a noble

noble lord *(in a particular situation in your Lordships House)* would, through the amiableness, and graciousness so peculiar to him, descend to move it (as I learned was the general custom in bills of this kind;) I was much disappointed, and, I confess, hurt, at the noble lord's continued backwardness. It was natural that I should make some enquiry into what, I conceived to be, a departure from a duty officially imposed upon the noble lord.

I *gathered up* a sort of solution of my puzzle, that "there was nothing *compulsory* in the noble lord's situation, to *oblige* him to move the Bill—*that he would avail himself of his freedom of choice*, and leave it, to any other peer who chose to take the charge of it, &c. &c. &c."

I WILL

I WILL not deny, my Lord, but the conduct of the noble peer somewhat alarmed me for the fate of my Bill: it augured, I thought, as if there had been some *tampering* from *some quarter or other*, to smother what could not, *in the face of day*, be defeated; but when cool reason resumed her throne, I abandoned such a thought, as *insinuating* an abominable libel upon the *purity*, the *justice*, the *impartiality*, the *wisdom*, and the *honour* of your most illustrious house! I could not, however, resist endeavouring to penetrate the cause of such an apparent violation of the usual forms of your Lordship's proceedures.

YOUR *Lordship will readily credit me*, when I say that I do not presume to pronounce

nounce as *authentic*, the reasons which were rumoured for your Lordships *neglect*, if not *condemnation* of my Bill.

By some, it was reported, that I had been treated with a shameful degree of duplicity, by *a very high personage*; that he affected to be, at last, indifferent as to the success of my Bill; but that, at all events, "*he was not by any means hostile to it*;" nay, it was even said, *that he absolutely declared so!* Yet, *it was also reported* (but I am to intreat your Lordship to be persuaded, that *I never gave any belief to the slander*) that he *indisputably* prevented the noble peer, whom I had engaged to move my Bill (when I found the noble lord had declined it, on the score of its not

not being a necessary part of his official duty) by assigning such reasons for that noble lord to abandon his promise, as, I assure your Lordship, I dare not repeat, for they contain such *scandalous reflections* upon the character alluded to, as might, propably, subject me to, what of all earthly terrors I most dread, the displeasure *of your illustrious assembly*; I must, therefore, leave your Lordship to conclude, that the reflections were seriously derogatory, not merely to the dignity, but absolutely to the *justice* of your immaculate tribunal!

I CANNOT help informing your Lordship, by some *mistake (for I am perfectly well persuaded it could never have been designed)* I was kept unac-

quainted

quainted with the noble lord's intention, of relinquishing the care of my Bill, *till the very last day on which it could be moved, so as to pass this session, and when it was impossible to prepare*, (even if I could *in a moment*, have found) some less delicate lord, to take it under his patronage!

A CURIOUS reason I had heard as assigned by some of your noble lordships, for not wishing my Bill to be discussed, "*kindness to me.*"—Now, in good truth, my Lord, my dull imagination cannot conceive there was much "kindness," in permitting me to go the lengths, I did, and throw away, what God knows, I can very ill afford, *a great deal of money*:—

Keeping

Keeping me in a state of harrassing uncertainty, and without any reason assigned, (for I cannot, and will not permit myself to give the least credit to the idle and calumnious rumours I have hinted at, so calculated to stigmatize the proceedings of your lordships, with duplicity, partiality, injustice, and I might add, collusion), strangle my Bill in your lordly cradle, because your lordships had *the power so to do!* Your power I do not dispute, but, I confess, I have had personal reason, *more than* once*, for regretting that any power ever had been placed *beyond the controul of justice*.—I have, also, heard it urged,

* Vid. Minutes of the Committee, for trying the merits of a petition for the borough of Barnstaple, Wilson, ver. Cleyland, presented in the last parliament, with the subsequent animadversions in the public papers, upon the decision of that Committee.

urged, in *the same idle way*—"that it is an act of *graciousness* in your lordships, to grant any Bill of Divorce, under any circumstances whatever."

THIS, my Lord, may indeed, be very true, for all I know to the contrary, being very little acquainted with the *intricacies* within your Lordship's bar; forming my opinion of right and wrong, upon their *old-fashioned principles, justice, founded upon undisputed evidence, without partiality and cabal*, neither of which, I have a thorough belief, ever stained the most trifling matter, subjected to your lordships deliberations.

BUT, be this as it may, my Bill has been somewhat hardly dealt by, and your Lordship will allow, that I have

have *some little cause* of irritation, as well from the reflection, indirectly at least, cast upon its character, as by the dilemma I am placed in, from not being able to develop the mystery in which its rejection has been involved!

To your Lordship, then, I am to look for the unravelling of this mystery.—Your Lordship's penetration, may, probably, find out (if the fact has been as reported) who the elevated miscreant is, who has dared to violate the purity of your lordships judicial characters, *by permitting collusive interference, to anticipate fair discussion.*

YOUR Lordship's information upon this head, will be truly grateful to me—I am naturally easy of belief—

open

open to conviction—yet, at the same time, I must acknowledge, that it is somewhat difficult to *browbeat, or cajole me* into an opinion of my being "kindly used," *when I feel that I have been most cruelly injured and oppressed.*—I must also add, my Lord, that however I may venerate authority, *in the fair exercise of its delegated functions*, it becomes the subject of my contempt and detestation, when it abandons its brightest ornaments—its most heavenly attributes——JUSTICE and MERCY!—it may shackle my person, but it can never appal my resolution, when I know that resolution is founded in *honor*, and in *duty*, either to myself or others.

As

As I must wait for your Lordship's information, as to the *mode* by which your House has rid itself of my Bill; I will only add further, at this instant, my *hope* that it will be found consistent (of which I dare not harbour a doubt to the contrary) with the *wisdom*, the *justice*, and the *impartiality*, which have, *without the appearance of an exception*, for ages, governed the proceedings of your lordships.

Much, my Lord, I understand has been *whispered* about "my intrigues, seductions, &c. &c." Now, pray, my Lord, hear what I have to say as to these charges, and with your Lordship's usual impartiality, judge me.—

I solemnly

I solemnly call God to witness, that I never put it into the power of any human being to charge me, justly, with the seduction of innocence, or a design to interrupt connubial happiness, and that I hold in as much abhorrence as any minister of the gospel can, the wretch, who, for a momentary gratification, would consign to infamy, and misery, an unprotected woman.

YET, my Lord, I do not affect a greater portion of chastity, than the majority of my sex possesses; nor do I mean to be understood to say, that I have always resisted temptations when thrown in my way, or when *private* and imperious causes have, unwillingly, compelled me to view home with horror and disgust.

UPON this subject, my Lord, I could say much, but delicacy, pity, and a principle of honour, which no obloquy shall force me to swerve from, command my eternal silence as to more pointed vindication.—If what I have now asserted can be controverted, your Lordship may rest persuaded, there *are a great many* who will, with equal readiness and pleasure, expose the *falsehood* and *hypocrisy* of it.

I HAD nearly omitted acquainting your Lordship, with another of the causes, *reported* for the rejection of my Bill:—As this reason conveys a kind of censure upon me, I am persuaded your Lordship's candour will admit the propriety of my adverting to it—It was, my

Lord, "the interest of my children, "which might be injured by my ob- "taining a Bill of Divorce."

I WILL not trouble your Lordship, with dwelling upon the futility, and I must add, impertinence of this objection.—I think it sufficient, at this moment, to vindicate myself from the implied charge of neglect to their interests, by observing, *that the mother of my children, is at this very time, in possession of a considerable sum of money, which, by marriage settlement of their grandfather, I had an indisputed right to*; having yielded up my title to that claim, in order that it might not be divided from the general fund, which had been appropriated to their

uses

uses by the will of their grandmother, *Lady Greenwich.*—Although my Lord, this money would have been, then, of most material importance to me, and indeed eventually *to them*, but apprehensive of what I have ever been but too much accustomed to *from a certain description of people—a malignant perversion of my conduct*—I did not hesitate to forego my claim—little, indeed, then thinking to what purpose that money was to be applied! The truth of this fact, my Lord, the acting trustee of Lady Greenwich's will can confirm.

In a former part of this letter, I mentioned my intention of saying a word or two upon certain questions,

sup-

supposed to be asked by the Bishop of Rochester, at the second reading of my Bill—it would not be dealing handsomely by that worthy prelate, was I to shirk my promise.—

YOUR Lordship will have the goodness to recollect (for I confess I am unequal to the description) that noble prelate's *manner* and *countenance* when examining a witness. But one pencil in Europe could convey the expression of either—that of David, the immortal friend, and Eleve, of the immortal Robespierre! In that manner, then, and with that countenance so *peculiar to himself*, the reverend prelate *is said* to have demanded of my astonished witness, "Whether or not Mr. Wilson

did

did not use to *beat* his Lady;" and again, "If Mr. Wilson did not keep a mistress in the house with his Lady."

MERCIFUL God! could a disciple of the meek saviour of mankind, ask questions so cruelly reflecting upon an unfortunate suppliant for justice, without the most indisputable proofs in his possession, *that the questions had their source in uncontrovertible facts!* Was the reverend lord in possession of such "uncontrovertible facts?" I will answer him in a language degrading indeed to myself, yet truly appropriate to him, *if he could ask such questions*, that he *barely lies*, if he dares say he can produce a semblance of proof, of my having ever forgot

what

what was due to myself as a man and a gentleman, however provoked by the misconduct and petulance of a woman, or by the *scurrilities* of a *meddling, insolent*, and *overbearing priest!*—With this gentle Philippic, *upon any man who could be capable of such ruffian-like conduct*; (but which I can never permit myself to believe the *worthy prelate* capable of). I take leave of his pious lordship of Rochester.—

WHENEVER the unfortunate mother of my children shall be permitted (and avail herself of) an hour of reflection, she will do justice to my treatment of her, and honourably, of *the general kindness* and *forbearance* of my conduct, even when her forgetfulness of what

she

she owed to herself, her family, and her husband, compelled me to wander from that home which, *she well knows*, I ever endeavoured to make the theatre of happiness to her, myself, and my children!——

On this painful subject, my Lord, I could write a volume, but it cannot interest your Lordship, or the public—it can only serve to awaken a thousand ungrateful sensations in my mind, and neither affect or amuse the indifferent.

Should it, my Lord, be supposed that I am *rehearsing a part*, let the inmates of my family be enquired of, "where I failed in my several charac-"ters of husband, father, master, or "neigh-

"neighbour."—But, my Lord, I beg pardon for my tedious egotism—the remembrance of my injuries and misfortunes unwarily led me into it—yet, surely, my Lord, if there ever can be an excuse for "modest merit to commend itself," it is when *power* unites with *cruelty* and *malignancy* to oppress their victim.

BEFORE, my Lord, I conclude, I am to repeat my request, that your Lordship will not suppose, I am intending to impress your Lordship and the world with an opinion, that my conduct has been without reproach; indeed, my Lord, so chimerical an idea never once possessed me—all I endeavour, all I wish, is, not to appear more censurable

able than I deserve; and your Lordship will, I am convinced, forgive my attempting, with just indignation, to repel the shafts of malevolence, and expose to contempt and abhorrence, a privileged, dastardly, fastidious power.

UNWILLING as I am to fatigue your Lordship's attention too much, at a time, although, I confess, I have a great deal more to occupy it, yet independent of that consideration (which indisputably has infinite weight with me) I find the subject so disgusting, that I feel myself unable to continue it just now to any greater length. I shall, also, proceed in it with more alacrity and confidence when I am honored

with

with your Lordship's reply, in explanation of the *doubts* which have occasioned this letter—In the mean time, I have the honor to declare myself

Your Lordship's

most distinguished admirer,

panegyrist, and

devoted servant,

RICHARD WILSON.

St. James's-Street,
July 1st. 1798.

FINIS.